

Student *elaboration* occurs throughout instruction

Most of us view elaboration as talking about something in an expanded manner (i.e., explaining in more detail or discussing about how one idea is related to another). Verbal elaboration is one of many ways to elaborate. Essentially, the process of elaboration involves changing the format of the idea while retaining the essence of its meaning, and adding connections to other ideas. Thus, when students read a passage and then paraphrases it, they are elaborating.

Other forms of elaboration include generating questions, creating images in your mind of what something looks, tastes, or feels like, predicting what will happen next, prioritizing the importance of things, and hypothesizing what something is about. Put another way, other than rote rehearsal or photographic memory, elaboration is anything the brain does as it is processing information, relating it to prior knowledge and experience, and forming new understandings of it. The mediation of student elaboration is one of the most critical things teachers can do to affect student learning. Thus, the more that instruction includes opportunities for students to elaborate on critical aspects of the strategy they are learning, the greater the learning and retention of the new strategy (also see [Connections](#)).

Ultimately, **students need to commit the steps of a process or strategy to memory**. Typically, this is accomplished by repetitive applications of the process, or repeated practice. Acquisition of knowledge of these steps can be enhanced considerably if instruction includes opportunities for student elaboration about each step.

In addition, effective strategy instruction includes frequent opportunities for students to elaborate on the overall strategic process, what the strategy is designed to do, why and how well it works, and where it can be applied to bring about success.

Effective Alternative

The heart of the solution is incorporating into your lessons frequent opportunities for all students to elaborate on critical aspects of the strategy they are learning.

Specific Tips

Ways to promote verbal elaboration of the strategy steps include:

1. Write the strategy steps on the board or overhead. Have students practice explaining the steps to the class or to a peer.
2. Provide a quiz that requires students to list (and/or explain) the steps of the strategy.
3. Provide a board game whereby each space that a student lands on requires the student to explain one of the strategy steps, or some other aspect of it (e.g., purpose of the strategy, where it can be applied, why it works, etc.).

Students also engage in visual elaborations of the strategy by developing mind maps depicting each of the strategy steps using cartoons.

PLAN strategy example

Think sheets included in this program that can be used in this manner include the **ASN Frame**. Here, a 3-main idea frame is used. The first main idea depicts characteristics of the strategy that are always present or would always be used. The second denotes characteristics of the strategy that are sometimes present or sometimes used. The last category denotes characteristics that should never be associated with the strategy or never be used.

PLAN strategy example

Think/Pair/Share, **Priority-Share**, **CROWN**, and **What?-So what?** are examples of elaboration activities provided in this program. Typically, each of these activities is used in conjunction with a specific question about the strategy. The question is designed to facilitate student reflection and elaboration about one or more of the critical features of the strategy. For example, to use the Priority-Share activity, you might provide students with a list of the strategy steps and then ask them to rank order the importance of the steps and provide a rationale for their rankings.

Strategy Learning Logs provide a set of guided questions designed to promote student elaboration. Questions associated with these can be readily adapted for use with **Think/Pair/Share**, **Priority-Share**, **CROWN**, and **What?-So what?** activities.

PLAN strategy example

[HOME – Tactics for use during the strategy lesson](#)

[SKILLS HOME](#)